

HOW OFTEN HOLD NATIONAL CONFERENCES. 1892—1893—1894—?

BY H. M. LICHTY.

How frequently should our national conventions be held? When the Brethren church was organized, it was decided that national conventions should be held every five years. Though there is a provision that a certain committee can call special national conventions if thought best to do so. The first three conventions were held at intervals of five years. The time for third convention falling to 1892 or two years ago.

There is no doubt but that this resolution was inspired by the feeling that the old church had too much Annual Meeting and that the new organization should do away with such an annual expense and disturbing element as the "Annual Meeting" had been.

When the convention of 1892 began to be agitated the EVANGELIST and some of the leading brethren favored postponing the meeting to '93 on account of the advantage that would be derived from holding said meeting in connection with the World's Fair. Others however insisted on the five year interval being long enough. One writer for the EVANGELIST advocating that it was a mistake to meet at so long intervals and zealously argued in favor of annual national conventions. To anyone who cares to notice or is interested in the progress of the Brethren church it must be evident that a new life and impetus was inaugurated with the convention of 1892. There was such an inspiration among the many workers and leaders of the church at this convention that it was proposed that the five year interval between conventions be reduced to two or three years, some even venturing the idea that the meetings should be annual. But after some thought and deliberation it was concluded best not to introduce such a resolution to the convention as quite a sprinkling of the old brethren were present who had been victims of Annual Meeting rule in the German Baptist church, and it was feared they would oppose such a resolution. The sentiment appeared to be unanimous, however, that a national convention should be held one year later—in 1893.

Although a number of the leading lights in the church, whose absence could not be accounted for, were not present at the convention of '93, yet it was a grand success. The new machinery that had been set to work in 1892 was overhauled, some improvements made here and there, and after all was done that could be done it was concluded that it would be necessary that the church meet again in national convention in 1894. This convention will soon be before us, and it is to be hoped that no effort will be spared to make it the most successful convention by far that our young organization has yet experienced. We have many more reasons to expect this than we possibly could have had it been two, three or even five years since our last national convention. It seems to me that we now have reached a point when we should carry a resolution that our national conventions henceforth be held annually. Many reasons could be given why we should meet once a year, but the progress we have made under a national or united plan of church work, in the past two years, should be evidence enough that to accomplish the best results for our money and labor expended we should meet no less frequently than once a year. By all means let us now begin to arrange for the national convention of 1895, and at the coming convention let all possible preliminary arrangements be made for the convention of one year hence.

Wray, Col., May 17th, 1894.

MY NATIONAL CONVENTION THOUGHTS.

ISAAC D. BOWMAN.

1 Every member ought to pray earnestly for the power of God's Spirit during Convention. Whether we favored having a convention or not, as this one will be held, let us pray and unitedly work for God's blessing upon it.

2 All who attend, crucify self entirely, exalt Jesus only, be slow to get angry, prefer others to ourselves, and be absolutely unprejudiced and to the reception of truth upon all subjects. Be "slow to speak" "He that offendeth not in word the same is a perfect man." Above all things have fervent love for one another.

3 Every possible influence should

be brought to bear upon our National and State Conventions, also upon our paper to be absolutely open for acceptance of all truth. Our Conventions and paper should be a stimulus for the love of truth.

The large majority of Conferences and church periodicals have taken away the key of true development and knowledge by cramming dogmatic and traditional theories down the throats of its people. We are only partially open to truth—perhaps more open than any other church, but there is great room for improvement.

An illustration. If ten years ago I would have written articles insisting that God's children to-day could have the power to heal all manner of diseases they would have been rejected by our papers. I believed it for fifteen years, I have judiciously preached it for five years. Now our paper is full of it. Christians in all denominations are accepting it. No trouble now—it is becoming popular. If we as a church would have been entirely open to accept truth ten years ago all of us would have accepted this truth, and the gifts of healing would have been cultivated and many hundreds would now be sound in body and soul who are not. Many do not believe today, but all would believe if we would carefully impartially and critically study the subject. I am opposed to controversy for selfish victory—for argument sake or to dogmatize, but with a loving desire to lift people nearer God. Our Conventions should freely, fairly, openly, thoroughly and lovingly ventilate all subjects. Our paper should do the same. We should not be afraid of truth. We have't it all yet, we never will have, but we can have much more than we have at present. The Lord will take care of the truth if we use good sense, good judgement and possess a good spirit in its presentation. Such questions as secret societies, oath bound, other societies, discuss their evils' their benefits, insurance of life, communions how often should they be held, weekly, quarterly, or once a year, or upon the "moon" day as some call it? We should produce the best Biblical arguments, also best historical. I have some light upon this question but have need of more. Should we have two